privatise the plant as reported in Oriya Samaj dated 26th March, 1999;

(b) whether Government are aware of the situation prevailing in Steel Industries as reported in the paper; and

(c) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) to (c) It is not a fact that welfare measures of the steel plants of Steel Authoirty of India Ltd. (SAIL) are being curtailed, nor is there any plan for privatisation of these plants at present. Government are aware of the current market situation in the steel sector and have initiated a number of measures such as rationalisation of DEPB rates, fixing of floor prices for certain flat products, reduction in cost of several inputs by waiving special customs duty, imposition of anti-dumping duty on certain HR flat products from Russia and Ukraine etc.

**Proposal to increase steel production**

3059. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to increase the production of steel;

(b) if so, the number of new areas in which production of steel is proposed to be undertaken during Ninth Five Year Plan; and

(c) what are the details of assessment made for increasing the production of steel in Ninth Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) With the onset of the New Industrial Policy, iron and steel industry has been dereserved from the list of industries reserved for the public sector. There is no requirement of industrial licensing for setting up of iron and steel plants in the country except for certain locational restrictions. As such, production of steel in the country is determined by the market forces of demand and availability. Since the steel industry has been opened up completely, setting up of new steel plants, increasing capacity .etc. are a matter of commercial judgement on the part of the enterpreneurs.

(c) As per the projections made by Working Group on Iron and Steel for the IXth Five Year Plan set up by the Planning Commission, the production of finished (carbon) steel will reach 38.012 million tonnes by 2001-02 against the projected demand of 38.68 million tonnes.

**Bailing out of Vizag Steel Plant**

3060. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken to bail out Vizag Steel Plant through revival plans; and

(b) the decision taken to expand its production capacity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) A comprehensive tumaround proposal based on the recommendations of an internationally/reputed consultant has been prepared and is presently under inter-ministerial consideration. This includes a proposal to increase the production capacity of the plant.

**मध्य प्रदेश में हीरे एवं सोने के नए भण्डार**

3061. **श्री दिलीप सिंह जूदेव:** क्या इस्पात और खान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:—

(क) मध्य प्रदेश में किन-किन क्षेत्रों में हीरे एवं सोने के नए भण्डार होने की जानकारी प्राप्त हुई है;

(ख) इन दोनों बहुमूल्य धातुओं का दोहन करने के लिए 28 मार्च, 1999 तक क्या-क्या कार्यवाही की गई है; और

(ग) इनके दोहन हेतु निजी क्षेत्रों एवं विदेशी सहायता प्राप्त करने हेतु की गयी कार्यवाही का ब्यौरा क्या है?